DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 386 681 CS 012 226

AUTHOR Durall, Patricia C.
TITLE Years of Experience and Professional Development: A Correlation with Higher Reading Scores.
PUB DATE 10 May 95
NOTE 20p.; Course Project, Murray State University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Grade 4; Intermediate Grades; *Professional Development; *Reading Achievement; Reading Research; Scores; Staff Development; Teacher Effectiveness; *Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS Kentucky; Teaching Research

ABSTRACT

A study examined whether a correlation exists between the number of years of experience and professional development that a teacher has and the gain in the classroom's average of total reading scores. Teachers participating in the study were the instructors of the three fourth-grade units of a lower-to-middle class socioeconomic elementary school in Kentucky, in their 23rd, 7th, and 2nd years of teaching, respectively. Using a Pearson r to compare the gains in total reading to the years of experience and staff development, it was found that a correlation does exist. It was concluded that teachers who stay in the profession gain knowledge of teaching and assemble strategies over the years to make them more productive and effective. (Contains 2 tables of data and 10 references.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 386 681

Years of Experience and Professional Development: A Correlation with Higher Reading Scores

Murray State University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the course
Research in Education

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
P Durall
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Patricia C. Durall

May 10, 1995

CS012226

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table of Contents

	page
List of Tables	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Review of Related Literature	2
Statement of the Hypothesis	4
Method	5
Subjects	5
Instrument	6
Procedure	7
Results	8
Discussion	11
Conclusion	12
References	14

List of Tables

Table		page
1.	Class Averages	9
2.	Years and Reading Gain	10

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a correlation exists between the number of years of experience and professional development that a teacher has and the gain in the classroom's average of total reading scores. Using a Pearson r to compare the gains in total reading to the years of expereince and staff development, it was found that a correlation does exist. It was concluded that teachers who stay in the profession gainknowledge of teaching and assemble strategies over the years to make them more productive and effective.

One of the most important functions of a school today is to teach reading. Exactly how or the method(s) of instruction used depends on the teacher's preference. Every teacher is unique and has their own techniques and their own style of teaching. A teacher's methods and techniques are not developed overnight or even in a short period of time. It takes years of practice and experience for a teacher to mature into an efficient and proficient instructor of reading.

Staff development (sometimes called professional development) is another valuable influence on teachers. It is a factor in the ongoing improvement, growth, and development of teachers. School systems require teachers to have a certain number of hours of professional development each year. This time spent in training their teachers is intended to (1) keep up with the latest technology, (2) to present the newest programs and/or methods of teaching certain subjects, such as reading, (3) to inform teachers of the legal aspects of their profession, and (4)to motivate teachers to make the next year the best.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if a correlation exists between the number of years of experience and professional development a teacher has and the class's average of total reading scores.

Review of Related Literature

In the field of research, several years ago there were few authoritative articles and even fewer research reports dealing with the role of the teacher (Joyce & Banks, 1971). Today, however, the amount of research has increased tremendously. Educational research covers the teachers as well as the students, principals, parents, businesses, and community leaders. It has been said that it is easier to study a single teacher than an entire class of students. So researchers have tried to connect teacher behavior rather than student behavior to achievement (Goodlad, 1984). According to Lillian Putnam (1994), though, "it is difficult to pinpoint methods of learning and teaching reading that are really new." She continues by saying that in many cases we are simply rediscovering what we have forgotten years ago.

In the article, "It's Not Easy," Ron Brandt stated that the research done in the area of reading just in the last decade has changed from the focus being on the product to the process. Classroom research has provided us with valuable knowledge about effective classroom instruction in the area of reading. However, researchers have "focused on the effect of some single variable such as a new method of teaching reading, usually over a short period of time" (Goodlad, 1984). In general, they (researchers) were not able to establish connections between the single interventions and students'

achievement or attitudes (Goodlad, 1984).

Schools that are considered to be successful have a strong curricula that stresses reading (Pearson, 1993). However, just having a strong reading program in the curricula does not ensure that students learn to read. Teachers, old and young, experienced and interns, stand before their students day after day to impart their knowledge of reading so that students will become avid readers and lifelong learners. After studying several approaches to teaching reading, Goodlad (1984) said that each of the approaches carries some weight and when used together, they can add up to a significant difference.

Most recent methods of teaching reading involve literature-based themes and units in child-centered classrooms. The basal texts are only used as a supplement. Reading ability groups are no longer used in classrooms because reading is taught to the class as a whole. Reading groups found in today's classroom are multiability cooperative groups that are either sharing something that they have read or reading together for a project.

Many researchers indicate that the teachers who show the most gain in achievement scores are the ones who take charge of their classrooms (Pearson, 1993). This type of teacher chooses and directs the academic activities that go on in his/her room. These researchers found that students' choices of activities yielded negative results or lower academic

achievement.

There are just as many if not more researchers who support the child-centered approach to the teaching of reading. Al Mamary, a proponent of outcome-based education, said in John O'neil's article, Future of OBE Is Up in the Air, that we need to focus on all students' learning at high-quality levels.

Regardless of the position one takes on the correct method of teaching reading, the child-centered or the traditional method, the teacher is still the key to students' learning and academic achievement.

Statement of the Hypothesis

Getting older and more experienced, in any field, is usually associated with getting 'better.' The teaching profession is no different. In general, it is assumed that as teachers become more experienced, they become better instructors. As a better instructor, students learn more under their direction.

It is hypothesized that the length of a teacher's classroom experience and amount of professional development is directly related to the reading scores of the classroom. The more experience a teacher has the higher her classroom's average reading scores are.

METHOD

SUBJECTS:

The teachers participating in this study were the instructors of the three fourth-grade units of a lower-to-middle classed socioeconomic elementary school located in Hopkins County, Kentucky. They (the subjects) were selected because of the differences in the years of classroom experience, exposure to professional development, the convenience of their being in one location, and the similarity of the students that they taught.

Since this study dealt with only their years as a classroom teacher and staff development, that is the only information of the teachers that was considered. However, other information from observation and interviews was that each teacher was female and a parent.

Teacher A: Twenty-third year of teaching and staff development.
Teacher B: Seventh year of teaching and staff development.
Teacher C: Second year of teaching and staff development.

It was also learned that each teacher used trade books instead of a basal series. Teacher A taught vocabulary words from the trade books while Teacher B taught vocabulary as a separate skill for the first nine weeks only and then she too pulled vocabulary words from the trade books. Teacher C did not teach vocabulary at all. She used strictly a 'writing approach'

to respond to the trade books that her class used. All three classes used the book, Tuck Everlasting. All other trade book titles were different for each class.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument used to measure the amount of gain/loss in the classrooms' reading scores was the second edition, 1978, of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level D, Form 2. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests measures both vocabulary and comprehension which, according to Gates-MacGinitie's research, are two components that actually do represent somewhat different abilities (MacGinitie, 1978).

In the vocabulary section of the test, the words were characteristic of words likely to be read by students in the grade range of 4.1 through 6.8. These words were considered to be general and useful and reflected a balance of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

The subject matter of the Comprehension section of the Gates-MacGinitie Test emphasized material from the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and to story or narrative material (MacGinitie, 1978). At level D, the content of the Comprehension Test was drawn from actual published sources which are listed inside the front cover of each test booklet. Questions in this section of the test included both literal and

inferential questions.

The NCE scores are based on a direct comparison of students in a particular grade and at a particular month in the school year. Since each NCE unit represents the same amount of reading achievement anywhere on the scale, they can be used in comparing individual students as well as groups of students. The manual also stated that a class average is more reliable than the score of an individual student.

PROCEDURE

On August 24, 1994, the second edition of Level D, Form 2 of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests was given as a pretest to all students of the three fourth grade units of an elementary school located in Hopkins County, Kentucky. The tests were hand scored. After vocabulary, comprehension, and total raw scores were obtained and recorded, the table for 4th grade, October was used to get scores for stanine, normal curve equivalent (NCE), percentile rank (PR), grade equivalent (GE), and extended scale score (ESS). The results for each student were charted by class and then a class average was obtained.

The same test was administered on April 10, 1995 as a posttest. The same scoring procedure was followed. However, the table used to obtain posttest scores were for 4th grade, May. Again, the results for each student were charted by class and

then a class average obtained.

The pretest class averages were subtracted from the posttest averages to find the number of points gained or lost in each area for vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading. Each class's information was charted by teacher.

For each teacher, the points gained in the areas of (1) Raw Score, (2) Stanine, (3) NCE, (4) PR, (5) GE, and (6) ESS were totaled. After totaling the points, a Pearson R test was used to see if a correlation does exist between a teacher's years of experience and their class's gain in total reading scores.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether reading scores could be expected to increase as the instructor gained years of experience in the classroom and in professional development training. Each fourth grade unit's scores were averaged as a class for both the pre- and the posttests and then the difference in the averages were found.

The averages for teachers A, B, and C, are shown below.

CLASS AVERAGES

	Teacher A			Teacher B			Teacher C		
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	Pretest	Posttest	Gain
VOCABULARY									
Raw Score	17	25	8	17	22	5	19	23	4
Stanine	4	5	1	4	5	1	5	5	0
Normal Curve Equiv (NCE)	44	52	8	42	48	6	46	48	2
% Percentile Rank	39	54	15	33	46	13	42	46	4
Grade Equiv (GE)	3 7	5	1 3	3 5	4 6	1 1	3 8	4 6	0 8
Extended Scale Score (ESS)	460	498	38	455	488	33	464	488	24
TOTAL			71.3			59.1			34.8
COMPREHENSION									
Raw Score	20	26	6	19	26	7	18	20	2
Stanine	5	6	1	4	5	2	4	4	0
Normal Curve Equiv (NCE)	48	55	7	37	52	15	42	39	-3
% Percentile Rank	48	61	13	27	54	27	37	30	-7
Grade Equiv (GE)	3 9	5 6	1 7	3	5 2	2 2	3 4	3 8	0 4
Extended Scale Score (ESS)	470	513	43	436	503	67	453	465	12
TOTAL			71.7			120.2			4.4
TOTAL									
Raw Score	37	51	14	36	48	12	36	43	7
Stanine	5	5	0	4	5	1	4	5	1
Normal Curve Equiv (NCE)	45	54	9	44	51	7	44	45	1
% Percentile Rank	41	59	18	39	52	13	39	41	2
Grade Equiv (GE)	3 7	5 3	1 6	3 7	5	1 3	3 7	4 4	0 7
Extended Scale Score (ESS)	463	505	42	460	498	38	460	483	23
TOTAL			84.6			72.3			34.7

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For each teacher, the total number of years of experience was then compared to the total number of points gained in Total Reading.

Years and Reading Gain

Teacher	Experience (Yrs.) (X)	Points Gained (Y)
A	23	84.6
B	7	72.3
C	2	34.7

The results were $r = .85$ which does support the hypothesis that a correlation does exist between a teacher's years of experience and staff development and the classroom's average total reading scores. When individual areas of Raw Score, Stanine, NCE, PR, GE, and ESS were compared using the Pearson r, these results ranged from $r = .82$ to $r = .89$.

To study further if a higher or lower correlation existed between any two of the teachers, a Pearson r was used to compare Teacher A to Teacher B, Teacher B to Teacher C, and Teacher A to Teacher C. The correlations were even higher,for these. Between teachers A and B, $r = 1$; between A and C, $r = .99$; and between B and C, $r = 1$.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the original hypothesis: A correlation does exist between the number of years of experience and professional development that a teacher has and the gain in the classroom's average of total reading scores.

Since group size per teacher remained close in number and constant throughout the year, this was not considered as a factor in the differences of gained scores. Teachers A and B began the year with 25 students. Teacher C began with 21. Teacher A had two students to move during the year but gained two more so her numbers remained the same. Teacher B had two children to move in November. She gained one in January and another after the posttest was administered. The number of students taking the posttest was one less than those taking the pretest. Teacher C had one students to move but gained four over the eight month period. The number of students taking the posttest for her class was three more that those that took the pretest.

Student academic abilities were not a factor since class had a wide range of abilities. High, medium, low, and very low students were evenly distributed among the three fourth grade units before the beginning of the school year.

Personal opinions, beliefs, philosophies of the teachers, or other variables, were not considered for this study. However, a

possible factor of higher reading scores for Teachers A and B could be the teaching of vocabulary words from the trade books that were used.

CONCLUSION

Teachers who stay in the profession not only gain knowledge of teaching but assemble strategies over the years to make them more effective. Today is definitely a time of uncertainty in the classroom. However, the knowledge we have today is more that it was five years ago and a lot more than ten years ago (Guskey & Hazelip, 1993).

Exactly what these strategies are is another area to be researched. In the book, Research Within Reach Secondary School Reading: A Research Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators, Alvermann, Moore and Conley (1987) state that "one of the primary goals of education in our country is to teach people to read." They stress the importance of reading by saying that " Reading is so important to us that our Constitution expressly protects the right of Americans to read virtually anything."

Some researchers and sociolinguists suggest that reading is firmly set in a wide range of activities that are woven into our society (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995). People who are widely read are able to participate in the debate of important issues. They are active in civic and professional

associations, and are usually the decision makers in corporate and political organizations (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995).

Even though there has been much research done on both teaching and learning, most of the research reflects very little about teaching reading (Anderson, Wilkinson, & Mason, 1991). While it is agreed that there is a need for students to learn to read, no one particular method of teaching has been determined to be THE way it should be done.

Perhaps reading research should be compared to going to a doctor when you are sick. The doctor usually runs one test at a time to rule out what your ailment is not. Then he can treat what it is. Research in the area of reading can start with one hypothesis at a time; prove it or disprove it then move on to what we can do to produce more and better readers and life long learners.

References

Alvermann, D. E., Moore, D. W., & Conley, M. W., (1987). Research Within Reach Secondary School Reading: A Research Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Anderson, R. C., Wilkinson, I. A. G., & Mason, J., (1991). A microanalysis of the small-group guided reading lesson: Effects of an emphasis on global story meaning. Reading Research Quarterly, 26 , 417-441.

Brant, R., (1994) It's not easy. Educational Leadership. 51(5). p. 3.

Goodlad, J. I. (1984) A Place Called School. New York. McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Guthrie, J. T., Schafer, W., Wang, Y. Y., & Afflerbach, P., (1995). Relationships of instruction to amount of reading: An exploration of social, cognitive, and instructional connections. Reading Research Quarterly. 30(1). 8-25.

Joyce, W. W. & Banks, J. A., (1971). Teaching the language arts to culturally different children. Menlo Park, CA., Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

MacGinitie, W. H., (1978). Teacher's Manual. Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests. Level D. Forms 1, 2, & 3, 1-86.

O'Neil, J. (1995) Future of OBE is up in the air. Education Update: ASCD (Assoc. for Supervision & Curriculum Development. 37(4). 7.

Pearson, P. D., (1993). Teaching and learning reading: A research perspective. Language Arts, 70, 502-511.

Putnam, L. R., (1994). Reading instruction: What do we know now that we didn't know thirty years ago? Language Arts. 71(5), 362-366.